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7

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a
Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS

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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

PART 41.

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CONTENTS OF PART XII.

No. CLXXV.	
THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBERREVIL.	PAGE
Chapter XXIX. Paul's Troubles Begin.....	433
Chapter XXX. Two Congenial Souls.....	436
The "Super".....	438
Lost Hours.....	434
Among the Markets. In Two Parts.	
Part I.....	441
British Amazons.....	443
Lelgarde's Inheritance. In Twelve Chapters.	
Chapter VII.....	452

No. CLXXVI.	
THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBERREVIL.	PAGE
Chapter XXXI. The False Love.....	457
Old Stories Re-told.....	461
Scotch Witches and Warlocks.....	463
Only a Passing Thought.....	468
Among the Markets. In Two Parts.	
Part II.....	469
Taken on Trial.....	471
Lelgarde's Inheritance. In Twelve Chapters.	
Chapter IX.....	476
Chapter X.....	478

No. CLXXVII.	
THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBERREVIL.	PAGE
Chapter XXXII. The True Love.....	481
Chronicles of London Streets.	
Newgate (concluded).....	486
Drowned.....	491
Our Hall.....	492
Two Russian Jesters.....	496
Lelgarde's Inheritance. In Twelve Chapters.	
Chapter XI.....	498
Chapter XII.....	501

No. CLXXVIII.	
THE YELLOW FLAG.	PAGE
Chapter I. Calverley's Agent.....	505
Chapter II. Exit Tom Durham.....	507
The Atmosphere.....	510
Alphabetical Liberties.....	514
Dreaming and Awakening.....	517
Punch and the Puppets.....	517
THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBERREVIL.	
Chapter XXXIII. Bid's Castle.....	532
Chapter XXXIV. Tibbie finds a "Devil to do her Will".....	534

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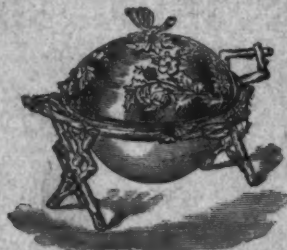
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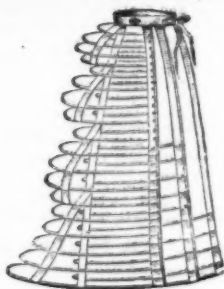
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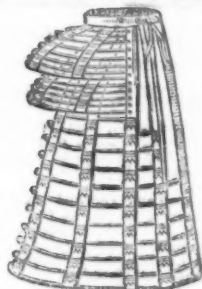
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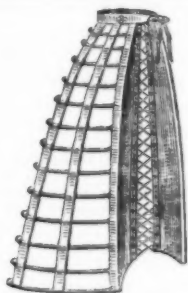
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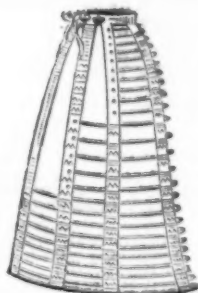
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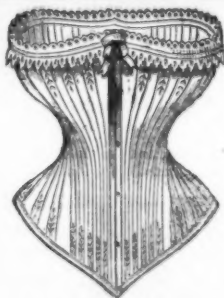
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"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 175. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1872.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE WICKED WOODS OF TOBEREEVIL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HESTER'S HISTORY."

CHAPTER XXIX. PAUL'S TROUBLES BEGIN.

DAYS passed, and Katherine had domesticated herself thoroughly at Monasterlea. She had taken possession of all the best things in the house with the most charming goodwill. The prettiest and most comfortable furniture had been carried into her room, and she had the warmest seat at the fire and at the table. The little red couch under the black archway in the parlour, which was covered with Miss Martha's knitting, and cushioned with pillows stuffed with down off Miss Martha's own geese, she had at once made quite her own. She had taken possession of Bridget, so that the handmaiden did little besides attend upon Miss Archbold. The visitor had also her hostess in thorough subjection, and she wrought her will pretty freely upon May, in spite of that young lady's rebellion against the tyranny of her rule.

But Katherine's attentions were chiefly devoted to Paul, and to no one else did she care to be agreeable. All through the dark winter days, in the quiet little cottage, she was restless and troublesome, and sorely tried the patience of her entertainers; but when the evening brought Paul her mood was sure to change. She took as much pains to amuse May's lover as though her life had depended on his being merry. And Paul was glad to be amused, though he did not like Katherine.

He did not like Katherine, and yet it was certain that she exercised an extraordinary influence over his actions. She absorbed his attention, in spite of his dis-

satisfaction and unwillingness to gratify her. She exacted from him a hundred little marks of homage, such as May had never looked for, nor thought of. He became so busy with her, and so tormented by her, that he soon found he had very little time to attend to his business. He became curiously changed in a short space of time, his temper alternating between bursts of anger at himself and her, indulged in generally during the hours of his absence from her side, and unreasoning fits of mirth, which almost invariably took possession of him whilst in her presence, and left bitterness of heart and exhaustion of body when they passed away.

Meanwhile May stood aside patiently, not wondering that the brilliant beauty should be found more amusing and attractive than herself. She stifled her heartache, for was she not sure of Paul's love? And why need she be jealous, and ungenerous, and unkind? Tender trust such as Paul felt in her was a thousand times more precious than the admiration of a moment. Therefore she would be tolerant, and await, however longingly, the happy hour when Katherine should take her way back to Camlough. But as weeks went by, and Paul's strange unhappiness increased, all thought of her own pain passed away, and keen fear for his welfare caused her a misery far more sharp than she had yet suffered. It was but a short time since he had begged her to save him from anything that should look to her like the beginning of that evil which he believed to lie in wait for him. And it seemed to her now that it was time to be up and doing for his sake.

One night the three young people were sitting late over the fire. The keeping of late hours made one of the changes which

Katherine had introduced into the house. She loved to amuse herself a long way into the night, though the servants grumbled, and even Miss Martha was dissatisfied. The mild old lady had been obliged to yield the point. She might go to bed herself when her eyes would not keep open, but midnight often found the three young heads bent together over the fire. May on such occasions would be as merry as her guest. She would have laugh for laugh and jest for jest with Katherine; and she would not be disheartened even when she found that Paul would listen to the stranger, and would give little heed to her.

"Tell me about Tobereevil," said Katherine to Paul. "I have heard scraps of the history, but I want to know it all. There could not be a better time for an uncomfortable story."

Paul's face darkened, as he gloomily prepared to comply with her request. He went steadily through the whole of the wild tale, passing from one lean hero to another amongst his ancestors, till he finished with Simon, the present terror of the country.

"Oh, dear!" said Katherine, when he had done. "And you are the next-of-kin. Why the end of it is that you will be the richest man in Ireland."

"That is it," said Paul; "and there will not be many wealthier elsewhere. I have lately been calculating the old man's wealth. Think of the accumulation during many hundreds of years!"

He said this with his brow bent and his eyes on the fire, and a look in his face which May had never seen there before.

"What is this old man like?" asked Katherine, who had lost all her levity, and become for once grave and earnest. "Is he very old? Is he in good health? Is he likely to die soon?"

"That is as may be," said Paul, grimly. "He may live long enough unless some one interfere to help him out of the world before his time. You know it is on the cards that I, being his kinsman, may do him that good office."

"But you could never be so silly!" cried Katherine, eagerly. "You would be probably found out, and if you did escape punishment, there would still be a great deal of trouble and unpleasantness. Besides, if you are of a superstitious turn of mind, as I strongly suspect you to be, it might interfere with the enjoyment of your happiness."

"That is true," said Paul, dryly. "It

is a view of the matter which I did not take before. But then—suppose I turn into a miser, and some bolder kinsman comes forward and murders me? It might be wiser to take the thing into my own hands."

"Nonsense!" said Katherine. "I forbid you to ruin yourself by anything so silly. Have a little patience, and don't believe in bogies. The old man will die, and you will get possession of all the wealth. You will leave this mouldy place, and become a great man in England, where taste and money are appreciated. You are cultivated and accomplished. You can have your will of all the good things of the world. You may marry the handsomest woman of your time—but, oh, I forgot! I beg your pardon!" and Katharine glanced at May, and laughed in make-believe confusion.

But May was bravely at her post, and out-laughed her.

"Go on, please," she said, blithely. "Go on and finish the story. We must let nothing interfere with the hero's grandeur. You must wed him to a princess—unless, indeed, you can find an unmarried queen. You are bound not to stop until you have placed him on a throne."

"I am bound to no such thing!" said Katherine, pettishly. "And he shall not go on a throne, for kings are wretched creatures."

"Well," said May, "that does not prove that your hero may not be a king. You have not done anything for him yet to prevent his being a very wretched creature. But all I say is this, that I hope he will be allowed to look after his poor subjects in these parts. There is a long account due to them from the forefathers of his majesty. We will include the settling of this amongst the pleasures you have mentioned."

Katherine laughed a cynical laugh. "No, indeed!" she said, "no such thing! My hero shall send Tobereevil to the hammer. He shall fly from this land of beggars and of bogs. He shall revel in his inheritance, not squander it for nothing."

"We talk about 'my hero,' and 'my hero,'" said May, smilingly, "but the heir of Tobereevil must declare for himself. Let him speak and say if he will turn his back upon his people."

Both bright pairs of eyes were turned on Paul, May's with more eagerness and anxiety lurking in them than their owner cared that they should betray. Paul grew troubled and embarrassed under their gaze.

"I don't know," he said; "I am not prepared to declare. But I am not sure that the wisest plan for the future master of Tobereevil would not be to get rid of the whole thing, and leave the curse and the woods to rot or flourish as they please."

May grew pale, but she answered readily, before Katherine had time to speak.

"Well, there will be time enough to decide when the right moment comes. In the meanwhile, is it not time that this meeting should break up?"

And the meeting did break up. Katherine had achieved triumph enough to last her for one night, and went singing down the cloisters to her chamber. She sang her light song while she unbound her golden hair and put off her jewels, and her laces, and her gown of glittering silk. And she fell asleep, smiling, and dreamt that May was weeping at her door, but she would not let her in. Yet May was not weeping; only lying awake in pain, with wide - open eyes, and fiercely - throbbing heart; for tears could not save Paul, however strength and courage might.

All the courage was needed, and needed yet more urgently as days and weeks went on. The change in Paul became more marked, and Katherine's subtle power gathered closer round him, while her cunning boldness kept him further out of the reach of May's wholesome influence. Her conversation ran upon money and power, upon the folly of a man's not enjoying whatever he could touch, upon the uselessness of so-called benevolent endeavours to do good to one's fellow-creatures, and every hour Paul showed a more restless impatience to possess the inheritance which the miser had promised should be his. His temper was altered; every flickering shadow had become a sombre cloud, every gleam of his old good humour appeared only under the guise of a feverish hilarity. Katherine amused him with stories of the gay world where people did what they pleased without trouble about duty, and in perfect freedom from the thralldom of what stupid people call conscience. She showed him that life in such a dreary corner of the world as this was no better than that of the mole in the earth, that gaiety, and excitement, and luxury were the only things that made existence worth having. And when Katherine talked she drove out the devil of gloom that tormented his soul; but only that when she had ceased seven others might enter in and take possession of it:

while May became like some pale spirit hovering on the threshold of this dwelling which had been her own, and kept aloof by the demons that had driven her out.

It had taken three strange months to bring things to this point, and one bleak day in March Katherine took a fancy to walk out by herself, away from Monasterlea, and towards the Woods of Tobereevil. It was a gray morning, with a cold and scathing wind, but Katherine was healthy and strong, and clad so as to defy the bitter weather. She was all wrapped up in furs, and carried a gay hat and feathers upon her head. As she walked along the road people curtsied to her, and looked after her; for her beauty shone dazzlingly in the chill of the colourless day.

It seemed to amuse her to be out thus alone, and on an errand of her own, for she laughed pleasantly to herself as she went along. She sometimes looked behind her, but she did not stop at all till she had come to the entrance of the Tobereevil Woods. Then she stood still and gazed at them. Katherine Archbold had not the least share of superstition or of poetry in her nature, yet her mind as she gazed at the trees was filled with the recollection of the story of their origin. But she had no shudder for the cruelty of the wholesale murder that had driven their roots into the soil. She was not troubled about freezing mothers and babes, and famished men. She thought only of the success of these strong woods which had so forced their roots into the sad reluctant land, covering many a mile with their mighty limbs. She had a vast admiration for anything that had triumphed, and she gloried in the triumph of the trees.

Having gazed her fill at them, she dived in amongst them, walking over the meek primroses, and never seeing the young violets. She plunged into the thickets, and amused herself by forcing her way through the underwood, fighting with stubborn branches that barred her way, delighted when she could break them and trample them under foot. The trees thrust her back, but she had her way, in spite of them, conveying herself into certain of their fastnesses, where human footstep seldom made its way. She found a pillared chamber of gloom, where the sun could never shine, and by the gradual spread of whose impenetrable roof the faithful light of the stars had been one by one put out. Perpetual darkness reigned

in this spot, and there was also a ceaseless sound of disturbance, for the roar of swaying miles of wood surged above and below in continual thunder. Even the mildest airs of heaven seemed to have secret stings, which goaded the Tobereevil Woods unceasingly into motion and sound. The darkness and confusion were very awful in this solitary dungeon which the trees had made for themselves. It seemed like a meeting-place for evil spirits. Katherine approved of it, and, in order to enjoy herself, took her seat on a fallen trunk over which she had stumbled.

CHAPTER XXX. TWO CONGENIAL SOULS.

KATHERINE had not been long in this uncomfortable spot when she heard a sound which, fearless as she was, caused her a momentary shock. To hear a footstep in such a place was startling. Yet there was a crackling of the underwood to be detected through, or rather on the surface of, the roar of the woods. Her eyes, being now used to the darkness, distinguished the outline of a woman's form, which was groping its way amongst the bushes. Presently a scream from the new-comer announced fear at the glimmer of Miss Archbold's white furs. The figure fell and cowered on the ground, and Katherine amused herself for some minutes with the terror of this unknown and silly wretch. Then she touched the prostrate body with the toe of her little boot.

"Get up quickly," she said, "whoever you may be!"

The creature, an old woman, revived at the human voice, and gathered herself grotesquely into a sitting posture. They could see each other now, however dimly. Katherine looked like some beautiful fairy, who had chosen for no good end to pay a visit to this spot; the other like some witch in her familiar haunt. For the old woman was ugly, and she was weird. In short, she was Tibbie.

"I know ye now!" she cried, "I know ye now! Ye're Sir John Archbold's daughter from beyant the mountain. Many a time I have heard o' the beauty o' yer face, an' the hardness o' yer heart. I know ye by yer hair, for though my eyes is not good, I can see the glint o't. I took ye for an angel, an' I'm not good company for the angels—not till my boy Con's some-way settled to his property. When Simon gives him his rights, then I'll set my mind to goodness; but people can't get their wills wid the grace o' God about them. An' I'm

bound to get my will whosomedever lends me a hand."

"Come," said Katherine, "this is interesting. My dear wise woman, I thank you for your compliments, and I am delighted to make your acquaintance. You thought you had something good, and you find you have something naughty; so you become quite friendly and tell me your secrets. Nothing could please me more. It gives me intense pleasure to meet with people who intend to have their will. And who is your boy Con—and what is he to Simon?"

She knew the story well, but chose to hear it from Tibbie.

"He's my sister's own son, an' Simon's nephew," she said. "An' I've sworn an oath on my knees that he shall be master o' Tobereevil. There was a will that was nearly signed whin Paul Finiston he cut in an' turned us out o' doors. I've been years starvin' yonder wid the black-beetles an' the rats; an' I'm bound to have my reward. I'll get back to his kitchen, an' I'll put my boy into Paul's shoes. I've been begging on the hills, but it's little I'll think o' that when I've the money-bags in my clutches, an' I'm come this ways through the woods in hopes o' meetin' somethin' wicked that'd help me. There do be devils an' bad spirits always livin' in the threes—I'm not afraid o' them if they'd give me a han'. But I'm mortal feared o' the angels, for they might keep me from my will."

Katherine looked at the creature with admiration. Where in all the land could she meet with anything so congenial as this hag, who had thus avowed a purpose which had made them enemies at once? "For I," thought Katherine, "have determined that Paul Finiston shall be master of Tobereevil, and I am resolved to have my will. And this creature is also bent upon forcing fate, so that her Con shall take his place. Yet we shall be friends, in spite of this little difference."

"My dear soul," said she, "sit down on this stump and tell me all about it. I am anxious to hear your plans. What do you mean to do in order to ruin Paul Finiston?"

"I would not tell you," said Tibbie, "only that I know you are hard-hearted. If I thought you soft an' good, I wouldn't open my lips to ye, not if ye prayed me on yer knees. For Paul Finiston's the sort that women likes."

"But he is a fool," said Katherine, "an impostor, and a beggar, who must be turned by the shoulders out of the country."

Tibbie crowed, and clapped her hands

with delight. "Oh, musha!" she cried; "you have the purty tongue in your head."

"How do you mean to do it?" asked Katherine. "Don't be afraid to tell me, for there is no one within miles of us. Shall you give him a taste of nightshade, or a little hemlock-tea?"

"No," said Tibbie, doubtfully, as if the idea had not startled her, but was familiar to her mind. "I have thought o' that, an' thought o't, an' I'll thry another way. I'll do it by a charm. An' that's what brought me here to-day. There's roots that does be growin' in divils' places like this, an' if ye can catch them, an' keep them, ye may do anything ye like."

"Roots!" said Katherine. "And what do you do with them?"

"Some needs wan doin', an' some another," said Tibbie. "The best of all is a mandhrake, for that's a divil in itsel'. It looks like a little man, and ye hang it up in a corner, where it can see ye walkin' about. So long as you threat it well it'll bring ye the luck o' the world. I go sarchin' through every bad place in the woods, and on the mountains, turnin' up the stones, and glowerin' under the bushes, hopin' to find a mandhrake that'll do my will. If I can find him, oh, honey! won't I make my own o' the miser? I'll make the keys dance out o' his pockets, and the money-bags dance out o' the holes he has hid them in, an' the goold jump out o' the bags into Tibbie's pockets. I'll make him burn the will that has Paul in it, an' write out another that'll put Con in his place. I'll have all my own way; an' the ould villain may break his heart and die widout me needin' to lift a hand against him."

"Capital," cried Katherine; "but where will you find the mandrake? Are you sure that it grows in this country at all? And suppose it does, don't you know that to suit your purpose it must spring from a murderer's grave? Then, even when it is found, there is danger in getting possession of it. It screams when its root is torn from the earth, and the shriek kills the person who plucks it."

Tibbie's face fell as she listened. "You're larnder nor me," she said. "An' are ye tellin' me the thruth?"

"Certainly, the truth," said Katherine.

Tibbie lifted up her voice and howled with disappointment. "Everythin's agin me," she said, rocking herself dismally. "But I'm not goin' to be baffled. I'll cross the says if ye'll tell me the counthry

where it'll be found. I'll get somebody to pluck it for me that'll not know the harm. For I tell ye that I am bound to get my will."

Katherine stood looking on, while the old creature thus bemoaned herself.

"There, now," she said, presently, "do not cry any more. I have a mandrake myself, and I will give it to you. It will be no loss to me, for I have everything I want. I like meeting with difficulties, for I have power within myself to break them down. If you like to have the mandrake, I will give it to you."

"Like it!" cried Tibbie. "Is it would I like it, she says? Oh, wirra, wirra! isn't her ladyship gone mad? Like to have the mandrake! Like to get my will! An' they said ye were hard-hearted. Then it's soft-hearted ye are, an' I was a fool to be talkin' to ye. Give away yer luck to wan like me! If I had it I'd see ye die afore I'd give it to ye."

"Oh, very well," said Katherine, turning away. "Of course, if you don't want it, I can give it to some one else."

Tibbie uttered a cry. She fell on the ground, and laid hold of Katherine's gown.

"Ladyship, ladyship!" she said. "I meant no harm. It's on'y amazed I was, an' I ax yer honour's pardon. Give me up the mandhrake, an' ye may put yer foot on me, an' walk on me. I'll do anythin' in the world for ye when I have a divil to do my will. Ladyship, ladyship, give me the mandhrake!"

"There, then," said Katherine, "I promise that you shall have it; and if ever I should want anything of you I expect you to be friendly. Stay, there is one thing I should like—to see the house of Tobereevil. Bring me there, now, and you shall have the mandrake to-morrow. I don't want to see the miser; only his den."

"Well," said Tibbie, who had now got on her feet, and recovered her self-possession, "if you can creep, an' hould yer tongue, an' if yer shoes don't squeak, I'll take ye through the place. There's a little worth seein' for a lady like yersel', but come wid me if you like it. On'y don't blame Tibbie if Simon finds ye out."

"Leave that to me," said Katherine, "I'm not afraid of Simon."

Tibbie clasped her hands and rocked herself with delight. "That's the mandhrake," she muttered. "There's nobody can gainsay her wid the mandhrake undher her thumb; an to-morrow it'll be Tibbie's."

So these new friends set to work to

extricate themselves from the prison of trees in which they had taken pains to immure themselves. They groped, and pushed, and fought, until they made their way out into the more open woods where air and moisture were found plentiful enough, and where the young vegetation was varied and magnificent, the delicate and wholesome growing mingled with the rank and poisonous. Ivy trailed from high branches of trees, making beautiful traps for unwary feet. Grass was long and coarse, being nourished with the giant ferns by creeping sources of the evil well of the legend. Streaks of fiery scarlet shining out here and there from the gloom of greenery, and blackish atmosphere of rotting thickets, announced the brazen beauty of the night-shade. Upon this Katharine pounced, making herself a deathly and brilliant nosegay as she went along; a poisonous sheaf of burning berries for a centre, some stalks of hemlock, some little brown half-rotted nutleaves with blots of yellow and crimson, some black slender twigs; the whole surrounded by a lace-work of skeleton oak-leaves. She would have nothing fresh, nothing of the spring, her whim being to make a nosegay out of deadliness and decay.

THE "SUPER."

THE theatrical supernumerary—or the "super," as he is familiarly called—is a man who in his time certainly plays many parts, and yet obtains applause in none. His exits and his entrances, his début and his disappearance, alike escape criticism and record. His name is not printed in the playbills, and is for ever unknown to his audience. Even the persons he is supposed to represent upon the stage always remain anonymous. Both as a living and fictitious creature he is denied individuality, and has to be considered collectively, massed with others, and inseparable from his companion figures. He is not so much an actor, as part of the decorations, the animated furniture, so to say, of the stage. Nevertheless, "supers" have their importance and value. For how could the drama exist without its background groups: its soldiers, citizens, peasants, courtiers, nobles, guests, and attendants of all kinds? These give prominence, support, and effect to the leading characters of the theatre; and these are the "supers."

Upon the French stage the minor assist-

ants of the scene are comprehensively described as *les choristes*. In this way the pedigree of the "super" gains something of nobility, and may, perhaps, be traced back to the chorus of the antique drama, a body charged with most momentous duties, with symbolic mysteries of dance and song, removed from the perils and catastrophes of the play, yet required in regard to these to guide and interpret the sympathies of the spectators. In its modern application, however, this generic term has its subdivisions, and includes *les choristes* proper, who boast musical attainments, and are obedient to the rule of a *chef d'attaque*, or head chorister; *les accessoires*, performers permitted speech of a brief kind, who can be intrusted upon occasion with such simple functions as opening a door, placing a chair, or delivering a letter, and who correspond in many respects with our actors of utility; *les figurants*, the subordinate dancers led by a *coryphée*; and lastly, *les comparses*, who closely resemble our supernumeraries, and are engaged in more or less numbers, according to the exigencies of the representation. Of these aids to performance *les comparses* only enjoy no regular salaries, are not formally enrolled among the permanent members of the establishment, but are paid simply for appearing—seventy-five centimes for the night and fifty centimes for each rehearsal—or upon some such modest scale of remuneration. This classification would appear to afford opportunities to ambition. Here are steps in the ladder, and merit should be able to ascend. It is understood, however, that as a rule *les comparses* do not rise. They are the serfs of the stage, who never obtain manumission. They are as conscripts, from whose knapsacks the field-marshal's baton is almost invariably omitted. They become veterans, but their length of service receives no favourable recognition. *Comparses* they live and *comparses* they die, or disappear, not apparently discontented with their doom, however. Meantime the figurant cherishes sanguine hopes that he may one day rise to a prominent position in the ballet, or that he may become an *accessoire*; and the *accessoire* looks forward fervently to ranking in the future among the regular actors or artistes of the theatre, with the right of entering its grand foyer, or superior green-room. Until then he must confine himself and his aspirations to the *petit foyer* set apart for the use of players of his class.

Thus it is told of a certain *accessoire* of

the Porte St. Martin, in years past, who had won a scarcely appreciable measure of fame for his adroitness in handing letters or coffee-cups upon a salver, and even for the propriety with which he announced, in the part of a footman, the guests and visitors of a drama—such as "Monsieur le Viscomte de St. Remy!" or "Madame la Marquise de Roncourt!"—that he applied to his manager for an increase of his salary on account of the special value of his services. "I do not expect," he frankly said, "immediately to receive twenty-five thousand francs, as Monsieur Frédéric Lemaitre does; no, not yet; although I bear in mind that Monsieur Lemaitre began his career with fighting broad-sword combats in Madame Saqui's circus; but my present salary is but six hundred francs a year, and a slight increase——"

"Monsieur Fombonne," interrupted the manager, "I acknowledge the justice of your application. I admire and esteem you. You are one of the most useful members of my company. I well know your worth; no one better."

Monsieur Fombonne, glowing with pleasure, bowed in his best manner.

"I may venture to hope then——"

"By all means, Monsieur Fombonne. Hope sustains us under all our afflictions. Always hope. For my part hope is the only thing left me. Business is wretched. The treasury is empty. I cannot possibly raise your salary. But you are an artist, and therefore above pecuniary considerations. I do not—I cannot—offer you money. But I can gratify a laudable ambition. Hitherto you have ranked only as an accessoire; from this time forward you are an actor. I give you the right of entering the grand foyer. You are permitted to call Monsieur Lemaitre mon camarade; to tutoyer Mademoiselle Theodorine. I am sure, Monsieur Fombonne, that you will thoroughly appreciate the distinction I have conferred upon you."

Monsieur Fombonne was delighted. He was subsequently to discover, however, that some disadvantages attended his new dignity; that the medal he had won had its reverse. The accessoires and figurants of the theatre always received their salaries on the first day of each month. The artistes were not paid until the sixth or seventh day. Monsieur Fombonne had to live upon credit for a week as the price of his new privileges. His gain was shadowy; his loss substantial.

With the choristes proper we are not

here much concerned. They are not fairly to be classed among "supers," and they pertain almost exclusively to the lyric stage. It is to be noted, however, that they are in some sort evidence of the connexion that once existed between the Church and the Theatre; the ecclesiastical and the laical drama. At any rate, the chorus singers often undertake divided duties in this respect, and accept engagements both at the cathedral and the opera-house. And sometimes it has happened that the discharge of their dual obligations has involved them in serious difficulties. Thus, some years since, there is said to have been a Christmas spectacle in preparation at the opera-house in Paris. The entertainment was of a long and elaborate kind, and for its perfect production numberless rehearsals, early and late, dress and undress, were imperatively necessary. Now the chorus of the opera also represented the choir of Notre Dame. It was a season of the year for which the Church has appointed many celebrations. The singers were incessantly running to and fro between the opera-house and Notre Dame. Often they had not a moment to spare, and punctuality in attending their appointments was scarcely possible, while the trouble of so frequently changing their costumes was extremely irksome to them. On one occasion a dress rehearsal at the theatre, which commenced at a very late hour, after the conclusion of the ordinary performance of the evening, was so protracted that the time for the early service at the cathedral was rapidly approaching. The chorus appeared as demons at the opera, and wore the tight-fitting scaly dresses which time out of mind have been invested upon the stage with diabolical attributes. What were they to do? Was there time to undress and dress again? Scarcely. Besides, was it worth the trouble? It was very dark; bitterly cold; there was not a soul to be seen in the streets; all Paris was abed and asleep. Moreover, the door of the sacristy would be ready open to receive them, and their white stoles would be immediately obtainable. Well, the story goes that these desperate singers, accoutred as they were, ran as fast as they could to Notre Dame, veiled their satanic dresses beneath the snowy surplices of the choir, and accomplished their sacred duties without any discovery of the impropriety of their conduct. It is true they encountered in their course a patrol of the civic guard; but the representatives of law and order, form-

ing probably their own conclusions as to the significance of the demoniac apparition, are said to have prudently taken to flight in an opposite direction.

Upon our early English stage the "super" had frequent occupation; the Shakesperian drama, indeed, makes large demands upon the mute performers. The stage at this time was not very spacious, however, and was in part occupied by the more pretentious of the spectators, who, seated upon stools, or reclining upon the rushes which strewed the boards, were attended by their pages, and amused themselves with smoking their pipes and noisily criticising the performance. There was little room therefore for any great number of supernumeraries. But spectacles—to which the "super" has always been indispensable—had already won the favour of playgoers. Sir Henry Wotton writes in 1613 of a new play produced at the Globe Theatre, "called All is True, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry the Eighth, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to matting of the stage; the knights of the order with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like; sufficient, in truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous." "Supers" must surely have been employed on this occasion. It is clear, however, that the money-takers, "or gatherers," as they were called, after the audience had assembled, and their presence was no longer needed at the doors, were accustomed to appear upon the stage as the representatives of guards, soldiers, &c. An early play refers to the combats of the scene being accomplished by "the blue-coated stage-keepers," or attendants. And the actors were classified at this time, according to their professional standing, as "whole sharers," "three-quarter sharers," "half sharers," and "hired men," or "servitors." The leading players were as joint proprietors in the undertaking, and divided the receipts among them according to a prearranged scale. Minor characters were sustained by the "servitors" who were paid, as our actors are at the present time, by weekly wages, and had no other interest in the success of the theatre with which they were associated, beyond desire that its exchequer might be always equal to their claims upon it. Philip Henslowe's Diary contains an entry regarding a non-sharing actor: "Hiered as a covenant servant

Willyam Kendall—to give him for his said servis everi week of his playing in London ten shillings, and in the countrie five shillings, for the which he covenanunteth to be redye at all houres to play in the house of the said Philip, and in no other." It may be noted that Shakespeare's first connexion with the Globe Theatre is shown upon fair evidence to have been originally that of a "servitor." In that case the poet must often have been required to appear in very subordinate characters—perhaps even characters not intrusted with speech. Will it inflame too violently the ambition of our modern "supers" to suggest to them that very possibly Shakespeare himself may have preceded them in the performance of their somewhat inglorious duties? The hired men or servitors were under the control and in the pay of the proprietor or manager of the theatre, and their salaries constituted no charge upon the shares of the chief actors. Still these were entitled to complain apparently if the hired men were too few in number to give due effect to the representations. In 1614 a dispute arose between Henslowe and his sharing actors, by reason of his having suddenly reduced his expenses by dismissing "four hired men." He had previously sought to charge their stipends upon the shares, although bound by agreement to defray these expenses out of the money derived from the galleries, at this time, perhaps, a managerial perquisite. But in addition to the servitors, as the representatives of minor and mute characters, there were also available the journeymen or apprentices of the more eminent performers. If they paid no premium upon being articulated, novices were at any rate bound in return for the education they received to hand their earnings, or a large part of them, to their masters. And this is precisely the case at the present time in regard to the pupils of musical professors and the teachers of singing, dancing, and feats of the circus. The services of the apprentices were transferable, and could be bought and sold. There is quite a slave-trade aspect about the following entry in Henslowe's Diary. "Bowght my boye Jeames Brystow, of William Angusten, player, the 8th of December, 1597, for eight pounds." Augustine Phillips, the actor, one of Shakespeare's partners, who died in 1605, and who by his will bequeathed to Shakespeare "a thirty shillings peece in gould," also gave to "Samuell Gilborne, my late apprentice, the some of

fortye shillings, and my mouse-coloured velvet hose, and a white taffety dublet, a blacke taffety sute, my purple cloke, sword and dagger, and my base viall." He also gave to "James Sands, my apprentice, the some of forty shillings and a citterne, a bandore, and a lute, to be paid and delivered unto him at the expiration of his terme of yeres in his indentur of apprenticeshood." From his bequest of musical instruments, it has been conjectured that Phillips sometimes played in what is now called the orchestra of the theatre. A sum of forty shillings in Elizabeth's time represents the value of about ten pounds of our currency. What with its "gatherers," "servitors," and journeymen, the Shakespearean stage was obviously provided sufficiently with supernumerary assistants.

The "super" is useful, even ornamental in his way, though it behoves him always to stand aloof from the footlights, so that distance may lend his aspect as much enchantment as possible; but he is not highly esteemed by the general public. In truth he has been long the object of ridicule and caricature. He is charged with stupidity, and is popularly considered as a very absurd sort of creature. But he has resigned his own volition, he has but to obey. He is as a puppet whose wires are pulled by others. He is under the rule of a "super-master," who is in his turn governed by the wavings of the prompter's white flag in the wings, the prompter being controlled by the stage-manager, who is supposed to be the executant of the dramatist's intentions. The "super's" position upon the stage is strictly defined for him; sometimes even marked on the boards with chalk. He may not move until the word of command is given him, and then every change of station or attitude must be pursuant to previous instruction. And his duties are sometimes arduous. He may often be required to change his attire and assume a new personality in the course of one night's performances. A member of a band of brigands in one scene, he may in another be enrolled in a troop of soldiers, sent to combat with and capture those malefactors. In the same play he may wear now the robes of a nobleman, and now the rags of a mendicant: A demon possessed of supernatural powers at the opening of a pantomime, he is certain before its close to be found among those good-natured people who saunter across the stage for the sole purpose, as it would seem, of being assaulted and battered by

the clown and pantaloon. It is not surprising altogether that a certain apathy gradually steals over him, and that such intelligence as he ever possessed becomes in time somewhat numbed by the peculiar nature of his profession. Moreover, in regard to the play in which he takes part he is generally but dimly informed. Its plot and purpose are a mystery to him. He never sees it represented or rehearsed as an entirety. His own simple duties accomplished, he is hurried to the rear of the stage to be out of the way of the actors. Why he bends his knee to one performer and loads another with fetters; why there is banning in this scene and blessing in that; why the heroine in white adores the gallant in blue and abominates her suitor in red, are to him inexplicable matters. The dramas in which he figures only impress his mind in relation to the dresses he is constrained to assume during their representation, the dresses being never of his own choosing, rarely fitting him, and their significance being always outside his comprehension. To him the tragedy of King John is but the occasion on which he and his fellows "wore them tin pots on our 'eads;" Julius Cæsar the play in which "we went on in sheets." "What are we supposed to be?" a curious "super" once inquired of a more experienced comrade. "Blessed if I know," was the answer. "Demons I expect." They were clothing themselves in chain-mail, and were "supposed to be"—Crusaders.

The "super's" dress is, indeed, his prime consideration, and out of it arises his greatest grievance. He must surrender himself unconditionally to the costumier, and obey implicitly his behests. Summer or winter, he has no voice in the question; he must clothe himself warmly or scantily, just as he is bidden. "Always fleshings when there's a frost," a "super" was once heard to grumble, who conceived the classical system of dress or undress—and for that matter, perhaps, the classical drama also—to be invented solely for his inconvenience and discomfort. But more trying than this antique garb is the demoniac mask of pantomime, which is as a diver's helmet ill provided with appliances for admitting air or permitting out-look. The group of panting "supers," with their mimic heads under their arms—their faces smeared with red or blue, in accordance with direction, not of their own choice—to be discovered behind the scenes during the performance of a Christmas piece, is an impressive portion

of the spectacle, although it is withheld from the contemplation of the audience. There have been "supers" who approached very near to death by suffocation, from the hurtful nature of their attire, rather than fail in the discharge of their duties. For there is heroism everywhere.

The stage has always been fertile in the matter of anecdote, and of course comical stories of "supers" have abounded; for these, the poorest of players, are readily available for factitious purposes. Thus, so far back as the days of Quin, there is record of a curious misapprehension on the part of the supernumeraries of the time. Quin's pronunciation was of a broad old-fashioned kind, a following of a traditional method of elocution from which Garrick did much to release the theatre. The play was Thomson's *Coriolanus*, and Quin appeared as the hero. In the scene of the Roman ladies' entry in procession, to solicit the return to Rome of *Coriolanus*, the stage was filled with tribunes and centurions of the Volscian army, bearing fasces, their ensigns of authority. Quin, as the hero, commanded them to "lower their fasces" by way of homage to the matrons of Rome. But the representatives of the centurions understood him to mean their *faces*, and much to the amusement of the audience all reverently bowed their heads with absurd unanimity.

But it is as the performers of "guests" that the "supers" have especially moved derision in our theatres; and, indeed, on the Parisian stage les invités have long been established provocatives of laughter. The assumption of evening dress and something of the manners of polite society, has always been severely trying to the supernumerary actor. What can he really know of balls and fashionable assemblies? Of course, speech is not demanded of him, nor is his presence needed very near to the proscenium, but he is required to give animation to the background, and to be as easy and graceful as he may in his aspect and movements. The result is not satisfactory. He is more at home in less refined situations. He is prone to indulge in rather grotesque gestures, expressive of admiration of the brilliant decorations surrounding him, and profuse, even servile gratitude for the hospitality extended to him. He interchanges mute remarks, enlivened by surprising grimaces, with the lady of the ballet, in the shabbiest of ball dresses, who hangs affectionately upon his arm. The limited amount of his stipend

naturally asserts itself in his costume, which will not bear critical investigation. His boots are of the homeliest and sometimes of the muddiest; coarse dabs of rouge appear upon his battered cheeks; his wig—for a "super" of this class almost always wears a wig—is unkempt and decayed; his white cravat has a burlesque air; and his gloves are of cotton. There are even stories extant of very economical "supers" who have gone halves in a pair of "berlins," and even expended rouge on but one side of their faces, pleading that they were required to stand only on the right or the left of the stage, as the case might be, and as they could thus be seen but in profile by the audience, these defects in their appearance could not possibly attract notice. Altogether the "super's" least effective performance is that of "a guest."

It is a real advance for a "super" when he is charged with some small theatrical task, which removes him from the ranks of his fellows. He acquires individuality, though of an inferior kind. But his promotion entails responsibilities for which he is not always prepared. Lekain, the French tragedian, playing the part of Tancréd, at Bordeaux, required a supernumerary to act as his squire, and carry his helmet, lance, and shield. Lekain's personal appearance was insignificant, and his manner at rehearsal had been very subdued. The "super" thought little of the hero he was to serve, and deemed his own duties slight enough. But at night Lekain's majesty of port, and the commanding tone in which he cried, "*Suivez moi!*" to his squire, so startled and overcame that attendant that he suddenly let fall, with a great crash, the weapons and armour he was carrying. Something of the same kind has often happened upon our own stage. "You distressed me very much, sir," said a famous tragedian once to a "super," who had committed default in some important business of the scene. "Not more than you frightened me, sir," the "super" frankly said. He was forgiven his failure on account of the homage it conveyed to the tragedian's impressiveness.

M. Etienne Arago, writing some years since upon les choristes, calls attention to the important services rendered to the stage by its mute performers, and demands their wider recognition. He holds that as much, or even more talent is necessary to constitute a tolerable figurant as to make a good actor. He describes the figurant

as a multi-form actor, a dramatic chameleon, compelled by the special nature of his occupation, or rather by its lack of special nature, to appear young or old, crooked or straight, noble or base-born, savage or civilized, according to the good pleasure of the dramatist. "Thus, when Tancred declaims, 'Toi superbe Orbassan, c'est toi que je défie!' and flings his gauntlet upon the stage, Orbassan has but to wave his hand and an attendant advances boldly, stoops, picks up the gage of battle, and resumes his former position. That is thought to be a very simple duty. But to accomplish it without provoking the mirth of the audience is le sublime du métier—le triomphe de l'art!"

The emotions of an author who for the first time sees himself in print, have often been descanted upon. The sensations of a "super," raised from the ranks, intrusted with the utterance of a few words, and enabled to read the entry of his own name in the playbills, are scarcely less entitled to sympathy. His task may be slight enough, the measure of speech permitted him most limited; the reference to him in the programmes may simply run—

CHARLES (a waiter) . . Mr. JONES;
or even

RAILWAY PORTER . . . Mr. BROWN;

but the delight of the performer is infinite. His promotion is indeed of a prodigious kind. Hitherto but a lay-figure, he is now endowed with life. He has become an actor! The world is at length informed of his existence. He has emerged from the crowd, and though it may be but for a moment, can assert his individuality. He carries his part about with him everywhere—it is but a slip of paper with one line of writing running across it. He exhibits it boastfully to his friends. He reads it again and again; recites it in every tone of voice he can command—practises his elocutionary powers upon every possible occasion. A Parisian figurant, advanced to the position of accessoire, was so elated that he is said to have expressed surprise that the people he met in the streets did not bow to him; that the sentinels on guard did not present arms as he passed. His reverence for the author in whose play he is to appear is boundless; he regards him as a second Shakespeare, if not something more. His devotion to the manager, who has given him the part, for a time approaches deliriousness.

"Our new play will be a great go!" a promoted "super" once observed to certain of his fellows. "I play a policeman! I go on in the last scene, and handcuff Mr. Rant. I have to say, 'Murder's the charge! Stand back!' Won't that fetch the house?"

There are soldiers doomed to perish in their first battle. And there have been "supers" who have failed to justify their advancement, and silenced for ever have had to fall back into the ranks again. The French stage has a story of a figurant who ruined at once a new tragedy and his own prospects by an unhappy lapsus lingue, the result of undue haste and nervous excitement. He had but to cry, aloud, in the crisis of the drama: "Le roi se meurt!" He was perfect at rehearsal; he earned the applause even of the author. A brilliant future, as he deemed, was open to him. But at night he could only utter, in broken tones, "Le meurt se roi!" and the tragic situation was dissolved in laughter. So, in our own theatre, there is the established legend of Delpini, the Italian clown, who, charged to exclaim at a critical moment, "Pluck them asunder!" could produce no more intelligible speech than "Massonder em plocket!" Much mirth in the house and dismay on the stage ensued. But Delpini had gained his object. He had become qualified as an actor to participate in the benefits of the Theatrical Fund. As a mere pantomimist he was without a title. But John Kemble had kindly furthered the claim of the foreign clown by intrusting him for once with "a speaking part." The tragedian, however, had been quite unprepared for the misadventure that was to result.

Delpini was, it appears, doomed to mortification in regard to his attempts at English speech upon the stage. He was engaged as clown at the East London, or Royalty Theatre, in Goodman's Fields, at a time when that establishment was without a license for dramatic performances, and was incurring the bitter hostility of the patent managers. It was understood, however, that musical and pantomimic entertainments could lawfully be presented. But the unhappy clown, in the course of a harlequinade, had ventured to utter the simple words, "Roast Beef!" and forthwith he was prosecuted and sent to prison as a rogue and a vagabond. For a time he seems to have been even reduced to prison fare. His case is referred to in a prologue written by Miles Peter Andrews, and delivered upon

the occasion of a benefit, when the performances not being for "gain, hire, or reward," were held to be permissible. The address was a kind of dialogue, spoken by Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Gibbs, in the characters of Melpomene and Thalia.

"Well, friends, we both are come your hands to kiss,
The tragic lady and the comic miss;
But should we both attempt to keep possession
Warrants may be issued from the Quarter Session:
For tho' alone, our tongues may be untied well
A dialogue will send us both to Bridewell:
Think of our danger should we meet again
The informing carpenter of Drury Lane;
Danger so dire it staggers all belief,
Water and bread, for calling out 'Roast Beef!'"

It used to be said that at the Parisian Cirque, once famous for its battle pieces, refractory "supers" were always punished by being required to represent "the enemy" of the evening: the Russians, Prussians, English, or Arabs, as the case might be—who were to be overcome by the victorious soldiers of France—repulsed at the point of the bayonet, trampled upon and routed in a variety of ignominious ways. The representatives of "the enemy" complained that they could not endure to be hopelessly beaten night after night. Their expostulation was unpatriotic; but it was natural. For "supers" have their feelings, moral as well as physical. At one of our own theatres a roulette table was introduced in a scene portraying the salon at Homburg, or Baden-Baden. Certain of the "supers" petitioned that they should not always appear as the losing gamblers. They desired sometimes to figure among the winners. It need hardly be said that the money that changed hands upon the occasion was only of that valueless kind that has no sort of currency off the stage.

When "supers" appear as modern soldiers in action, it is found advisable to load their guns for them. They fear the "kick" of their weapons, and will, if possible, avoid firing them. Once in a military play a troop of grenadiers were required to fire a volley. Their officer waved his sword and gave the word of command superbly; but no sound followed, save only that of the snapping of locks. Not a gun had been loaded. An unfortunate unanimity had prevailed among the grenadiers. Each had forborne to load his weapon, trusting that his omission would escape notice in the general noise, and assured that a shot more or less could be of little consequence. It had occurred to no one of them that his scheme might be put into operation by others beside himself—

still less that the whole band might adopt it. But this had happened. For the future their guns were given them loaded.

LOST HOURS.

It was a mournful watch she kept,
In the soundless winter night,
While all her world around her slept,
And the pitiless stars shone bright;
For she saw the years in long review,
The years she had trifled past,
The years when life was bright and new,
And, what had they left at last!
And she cried, as she thought of her drooping flowers,
Her baffled hopes and her failing powers:
"Oh my lost hours!"

What a harvest might have been garnered in,
When the golden grain was wasted!
What a nectar of life it was hers to win,
When the draught was barely tasted!
What happy memories might have shone,
Had folly never stained them!
What noble heights to rest upon,
If a steadier foot had gained them!
And she cried as she sat mid her faded flowers,
"Rashness and weakness bring fatal powers;
Oh my lost hours!"

Too late for battle, too late for fame,
Comes the vision of better life.
With eyes that are burning with tears of shame
She looks on the world's keen strife;
The patient love cannot pardon now,
Or the fond believing cheer.
Where the white cross stands and the violets blow,
Lie the loved that made life so dear.
Kind nature renews her perished flowers,
But death recks nothing of sun or showers;
Ah, for lost hours!

AMONG THE MARKETS.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THANKS to the wholesale demolition of ancient slums, Smithfield, or Smoothfield, the ancient "campus planus," is no longer difficult of access. The narrow streets and tortuous approaches, once made dangerous to life and limb by countless herds of over-driven cattle, have disappeared, leaving in their place broad roadways and open spaces to be let for building purposes, at prices which would make even the fortunate shoddy aristocrats of Fifth Avenue stare with amazement. The old streets and time-honoured landmarks have been swept away, and the fine old English cattle-dealer, with mouth full of strange oaths and greasy pocket well lined with oleaginous country notes, has disappeared from the ancient field.

The cattle-pens are gone, and the poor goaded oxen and worried sheep have betaken themselves to Islington. Often have I wondered what became of the sorry hacks formerly sold in Smithfield. What could those poor wall-eyed, wind-galled, spavined, foundered, staggy bags of bones

be good for? For the knacker's yard? Not always. Fate was not always so kind to these poor played-out Bucephali, but granted them a short respite from the tanner, the glue-maker, and the cat's-meat man, only that the last glimmering of vitality might be driven out of their wretched carcasses—that they might literally die in harness. Living, some few years ago, about ten miles from London, it was my luck to be driven on a four-horse omnibus every morning to the City by an exceedingly flashy driver. Tommy Ames was a great artist in his walk, or rather drive of life; not a gentleman coachman, lifting the ribbons nearly over his head at a pull-up, but a thorough workman, keeping each individual animal up to collar, and taking every ounce out of his team. His omnibus was the shabbiest, his harness the seediest, his horses the most woebegone "hair trunks" on the road, but his pace was undeniable, beating out of sight the neat vehicles and well-fed animals of the opposition. Much as I relished the pace, I could not help pitying the poor over-worked beasts, and one day could not refrain from asking Tommy if his horses never got any rest.

"Rest," he answered, coolly, "my 'osses rest when they're dead. You see, sir, I buy 'em at Smiffle, two pun ten a head all round, and sell 'em dead for a sov. They mostly last from six weeks to two months, so my 'osses don't take much out of me. In course I picks them as has a bit o' blood in 'em, and I looks out for a vicious heye; I likes a vicious heye, I do. A 'oss as has wice in him has go in him, safe as the Bank; and temper or no temper, let me alone for putting 'em along." And the heartless Automedon put them along accordingly. Unfortunate "tits" persuaded by all-powerful whipcord to "spank" along sorely against their will! That near leader, now quivering under the lash of a vulgar 'bus driver is a thorough-bred equine aristocrat, every inch of him. The blood of the Darley Arabian, his desert-born ancestor, courses through his veins and throbs in the great heart age and ill-usage have failed to quell. The condition of those shaky fore-legs, sadly battered about the knees, was once a source of care and sleepless nights to the high and mighty ones of the land, for he was then a popular favourite for a great "event." His morning gallops, watched from afar by vigilant touts, were duly chronicled with the same loving minuteness that records the walks on the

Slopes of Victoria Regina. With light, springy step, he daintily trod the "Severals" or the "Limekilns," or, with thundering hoof, spurned the broad green ribbon of the Rowley Mile.

At last came the great day when Dog-stealer (by Birdcatcher—Nancy) was to prove his mettle, and carry the fortunes of that ignoble Cæsar, his owner, to victory. The vast Roodee was crammed with eager spectators, the walls of ancient Chester covered with anxious bettors clinging like flies on the steep sides of the natural amphitheatre. The favourite was the cynosure of all eyes, the observed of all, as, steered by a tiny miniature man in shining satin, he took his preliminary canter. The hour had come, and the horse; the flag fell, and Dogstealer made short work of his numerous opponents. Bearing his colours gallantly to the fore, he came away at the distance, and amid shouts of "The favourite walks in," passed the post, the winner of the Chester "Coop." He was a proud horse that day. Eyes hitherto blinded by prejudice or hoodwinked by antagonism suddenly opened to his good points. Persistent detractors who had denounced him as a fiddle-headed, slack-ribbed brute, with "too much daylight under him," sorrowfully confessed him a veritable "clinker." Bright eyes looked lovingly upon him, and small white plump hands—long to be gloved with the proceeds of his victory—applauded him enthusiastically. Flushed with victory, his owner—with whom it had been a case of "man or mouse" that day—led the beautiful animal in to weigh; the tidings of Dogstealer's feat sped far and near, while his lucky backers rubbed their hands amid the ominous silence of the ring, and drank Dogstealer's health in rivers of champagne. He did not get on so well afterwards. Defeat after defeat dimmed the glory of his sentcheon; down he went, ever lower and lower yet—to the cab, and ultimately to that lowest deep of "Smiffle." There is some comfort in reflecting that his ungrateful owner was hanged.

The Smithfield of tradition is no more. A stately building, chiefly of iron and glass, but with external facing of red brick and white stone, as if indicating the streaks of fat and lean within, is dedicated to the purpose of a metropolitan dead meat market. Light and graceful, but immensely strong iron arches, enclose a vast space furnished with material for countless Homeric banquets.

On Saturdays—when retail as well as wholesale business is done—the market presents a very animated spectacle; the spoils of slaughtered flocks and herds lie around in gigantic heaps, while busy, stalwart men hurry past, carrying barons of beef, whole sheep, and fat porkers in every direction. But the chief glory of the new meat market is in its admirable subterranean arrangements. Beneath the busy mart is an immense vault occupied by a vast cobweb of railway tracks. Hither come the trucks laden with meat from metropolitan abattoirs, or more distant Scotland. By admirable mechanical contrivances, the ponderous masses of juicy beef and fine-grained mutton are hoisted to the level of the floor above, at a notable saving of cartage, portage, and human labour generally. The City has reason to be proud of its model market, and will probably find the two millions spent upon it turn out no unprofitable investment.

Within shot of Smithfield is the vegetable market of Farringdon, once aspiring to, and even now not despairing of a successful rivalry with Covent Garden. It is, however, although well stocked with vegetables of all sorts and sizes, from huge drumheads to doll's cabbages packed by hundreds in neat baskets, entirely devoid of the features which give to the often-described Covent Garden its never-failing interest. Sanguine people, however, hope for better times, and there is talk of rebuilding Farringdon Market altogether, and giving it every chance of success against its more favoured rival.

It is very doubtful to me whether any person not actually "located" within its precincts ever succeeded in finding his way about Leadenhall Market. Such a wonderful labyrinth surely never existed since the days of ill-used Ariadne. It would have puzzled Theseus to have found his way in and out of the innumerable alleys, courts, and passages, making up this wonderful depot of every imaginable comestible. All kinds of creatures, furred or feathered, biped or quadruped, dead or alive, are here for sale. A square covered space is assigned to the raiment that but recently clad the lordly steer. There they lay, hides, horns and all, in quaint layers, shadowing forth the grand proportions of their once mighty proprietors, who now fill the meat market inside, where meat enough to furnish a thousand lord mayor's feasts lies heaped. Short-horned Devon, and long-horned, ruddy, curly Hereford, have been

done to death to supply the roast beef of old England. Huge Leicesters and plump Southdowns elbow the tiny dainty Welsh sheep, while huge porkers look scornfully down on the meek little sucking-pigs ready for the spit, there to be roasted until their eyes drop out—the index of perfect cookery—and then to be devoured with plum-sauce, according to the dictum of the late Mr. Rush, the eminent murderer (hanged some years since at Norwich), or to be absorbed by milder mannered men with soothing apple-sauce. But the poultry market is perhaps the chief glory of Leadenhall. What regiments of geese, not green light weights, but substantial stubble-fed mag-nates, await their final stuffing of sage and onions and a glorious tomb in an appreciative stomach! Not regiments, but brigades, nay, whole armies of fowls, eclipse the geese in number if not in majesty, while turkeys are comparatively scarce, probably knowing their mission, and reserving their energies for Christmas. Plump pigeons, their cooing stayed for ever, vainly struggle for notice among their more majestic competitors, and are only kept in countenance by hecatombs of tiny but toothsome larks. Tenants of moor and marsh, copse and stubble, "birds of rare plume," with their once gorgeous tints now, alas! dimmed by death, hang around in rich luxuriance.

Cock-pheasants, glittering with metallic hues, are linked with their soberly clad mates. Little brown partridges, modest in their suit of humble brown, are not altogether put out of court by their meretricious French cousins, gay in their upper attire and red as to their extremities. From his heathery home on the breezy hillside comes the succulent grouse. Near him is his more stately cousin, the blackcock, boasting beneath his raven plumage three several kinds of meat, while further on hangs the great monarch of the race, the lordly capercaillie, auerhahn, or cock of the wood, saturated with the aroma of fragrant pine-buds culled in the gloomy forests of his native Norway. Plump hares, no scraggy rascals in fine training, but broad-backed fellows from Norfolk, ten and eleven pounders, doubtful as yet of their ultimate fate—the fragrant roast or the savoury jug—tiny aristocratic wild rabbits, disdaining companionship with the bloated plebeians from Ostend, await a final asphyxia at the hands of the much-abused, indispensable, tear-compelling onion. Round-breasted, plump-thighed woodcock turn up their slender bills at the neighbourhood of their

poor relation the snipe, while curly-tailed mallard, prim little teal, and juicy widgeon await the lemon and cayenne which are their inevitable fate.

But live dogs distract attention from dead game. The friend of man demands his notice with exacting bark, or insinuating whine. Huge mastiffs tug impatiently at their chains, bull-dogs—fine old conservatives these—blink sleepily through half-closed eyes at the scene, regarding the whole market, and indeed the world of these degenerate days, with ineffable scorn, as utterly gone and lost since the fine old English pastime of bull-baiting was abolished. More hopeful of the future are the sleek, wiry, graceful black-and-tan terriers; and they are in the right, for rats are not likely to become as rare as bastards for some time to come. Contemptuously sneering at the mixed society around them, supercilious pugs turn up their wrinkled noses in disdain, or lolling carelessly on their cushions look hopefully forward to the happy time when they shall exchange the atmosphere of Leaden-hall for the more rarefied ether of Mayfair or Belgravia.

With sharp joyous “yap” the jovial Scotch terriers invite notice; pushing fellows these, not easily put down nor snubbed, but used to petting, to having their own way, and working their own wicked will on tassels, fringes, and other attractive odds and ends; tough little doggies too, and able, “on a pinch,” to take their own part right well. It was once my privilege to number one of these dogs among my dearest friends. I have seen the little rogue run furiously up to a huge Newfoundland, seize the good-natured monster by the neck, and while swinging in the air enjoy in his doggish imagination the idea that he was giving the giant a good shaking!

Long-eared King Charles’ spaniels—who appear to think that their mission in life is confined to crossing their paws and looking pretty—recline with languid, high-bred ease in dainty baskets near a brace of milk-white bull-terrier pups. Now white bull-terriers have a fatal fascination for the present writer. I have ever cherished a warm admiration for these charming animals, uniting as they do pluck, strength, fidelity, and beauty. I am not particular as to their entire whiteness, as a beauty-spot near the tail, and a brindled patch over one eye, only invest the lovely possessor with an additional charm, like a patch of court-plaister on the cheek of Belinda.

Walking one day in the market, enjoying the happy mental condition lyrically ascribed to the Jolly Young Waterman, who “rowed along thinking of nothing at all,” I espied a lovely “purp” reclining in his little humble bed. He was asleep. Doubtless, in his doggish dreams visions of future greatness floated before him; whole hecatombs of rats, untimely slain, ministering to his glory, and stamping him as no unworthy scion of a noble race. He opened one eye—his left eye, adorned with a patch of brindle—and gave me a glance that went straight to my heart. We had divined each other. From that moment our interests were identical. The wary proprietor—doggiest of men—had not been unobservant of my affectionate looks. “Fine purp that, sir,” he remarked in oily tones; “his father is the best bred dawg in Hingland. Maybe you’ve heard, sir, of Muggins’s Boxer?”

Much humbled, I confessed that I had not had the advantage of numbering that renowned animal among my acquaintance. “Best dawg livin’,” said my doggy friend; “has killed rats afore the royal family, and ‘arf the crowned ‘eds in Europe.”

It dawned upon me that the owner of this canine pearl was drawing slightly on his imagination, but I was too much enchanted by admiration to contradict him. I was the captive of his bow—his very long bow—and of his spear. I became the owner of the celestial pup, parting, with a sigh, with my last sovereign, as one upon whose like I might not look again for some time to come. The dog grew apace, increasing daily in beauty, and already sweet visions of an impromptu rat-pit in the back kitchen flitted across my mind, when—but why revive an unspeakable grief?—he was stolen: lost to me for ever. No treasure I could offer, and “no questions asked,” sufficed to restore Nipper to my longing arms; he was gone like a lovely flower torn from its stem.

Apparently unheeding the cries of their natural enemies, whole flocks of pigeons enjoy a happy, if crowded existence. They are here of all sorts, sizes, and varieties. Slender, wattled carriers wait impatiently for the time when they shall again spread their wings, bearing to anxious men tidings of joy or sorrow, of sudden wealth or dire disaster, of battle, victory, or of death. Graceful tumblers—aërial acrobats—pent in narrow space, meek little black-hooded nuns, frilled Jacobins, vain fantails, snowy-

white in plumage, conceited pouters, puffed and swollen with a preposterous dignity, tender, softly cooing doves, and swift blue-rocks, chosen victims of the gun, divide the honours of the live poultry shops with the stately Shanghai, the fashionable Brahmapootra, and the game little Bantam. Casting a wistful glance at a fine lop-eared rabbit—a choice variety—our old friend Reynard shows his cunning vizard. Poor fellow! I warrant he would rather be leading a field of well-mounted gentlemen, riding “on a lot o’ money,” a merry dance over the grass counties, than be sitting here, with dry pads and mangy-looking brush.

Parrots grey, parrots green, cunning parakeets, gorgeous lories, and swinging, crested cockatoos, split the air with their screams, shrieking the praises of Pretty Poll, and demanding, with such pertinacious repetition, to be informed of the time of day, that one cannot shake off the impression that they must have important appointments to keep, and, perhaps, heavy settlements to make with the monkeys grinning and chattering opposite them.

Loquacious magpies add to the din, but do not interrupt the profound cogitations of the solemn, glossy-coated raven, who, unheeding the chatter of the thoughtless, volatile creatures around him, wraps himself in his meditations, and ponders on grave and solemn subjects far above the comprehension of the vulgar crowd. Long-billed curlews pine for a “sniff of the briny,” and look curiously at plump, happy little dormice, sleek, comfortable little beasts; funny little guinea pigs nibble at their greenmeat, making a mighty fuss over a humble cabbage-leaf, while beneath them crawls a creature of lower organism—the humble tortoise—whom a time-honoured fable has immortalised as the type of the slow, steady, meritorious plodder—the winner of the most celebrated stern wager on record. What a source of comfort has that well-worn fable been to the dull mediocrities of all succeeding ages! It was well enough, no doubt, in its day, when sailors were afraid of losing sight of land; when the lumbering war-chariot was quoted as a type of fearful velocity, and the sounding javelin imagined to be a terrible weapon; but the “form” of Chelonius is hardly good enough for these latter days: it requires pace as well as bottom to bring folks into the front rank in the year of grace 1872. For all this, the modest walk, or rather

crawl in life of Chelonius, has many advantages. The sober iron-clad does not wear “his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at,” not he; but when insulted, kicked, or trampled on by an unappreciative world, votes himself “incompris,” draws in his horns, and retires into himself, there to wait till called for. I love the unobtrusive tortoise right well, mainly, I believe, on account of his family resemblance to the luscious diamond-backed terrapin, defined by the Transatlantic showman as “an amphibberous animile—can’t live on land, and dies in the water.”

Many a time and oft have I met that interesting creature, and never have I experienced the slightest difficulty in “putting myself outside” of him. Admirable as my hard-shell friend is in soup, the highest and most apoplectic authorities agree in declaring that the terrapin “prefers” to be eaten stewed.

Like Sir Richard Strachan, “burning to be at ‘em,” blear-eyed ferrets blink viciously at noisy, conceited ducks; game-cocks trumpet their shrill note of defiance; hedge-hogs suggest a few pointed remarks. But it is getting late, the shops are shutting up, the last haggler for a cheap ox-head is carrying off his prize in triumph, so we will emerge into the open street, turn our backs upon the “tall bully” of Fish-street-hill, and wending our way homewards, look forward hopefully to the next market-day.

BRITISH AMAZONS.

AMAZONIAN dames, be it said rejoicingly, are not common products of British soil; still it has now and again given birth to women as ready with the sword as their sisters with the more natural weapons of the sex. Boadicea led the Icenii against the legions of Suetonius, with a courage deserving better fortune. Athelfleda, the warlike daughter of Alfred, directed the slaughter of the Danes in the streets of Derby. Our early English queens were familiar enough with the tented field and the clang of battle; but the Mauds, Eleanors, Isabellas, and Philippas, were alien born. Had the Armada succeeded in landing its armed freight, the Prince of Parma would have had to try conclusions with an antagonist more than worthy of his steel, in the greatest of the Tudor sovereigns. When Elizabeth, marshalling her enthusiastic troops at Tilbury, declared she would be

their general rather than dishonour should befall her realm, telling them, "I am come amongst you at this time, not for my own recreation or sport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, for my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and blood even to the dust;" depend upon it, not a man who heard her spirit-kindling words, or saw her

Most bravely mounted on a stately steed,
With truncheon in her hand,

doubted, if the occasion came, that his queen's actions would justify her proud speech, and prove she had, as she boasted, the heart of a king, and of a king of England too!

For centuries after the Conquest, Englishmen were never happy unless they had some fighting on hand. If they were, for a wonder, at peace with France and Scotland, they contrived to find something to fight about among themselves—to-day the crown, to-morrow the charter. Bellicose barons were never at a loss for rebellion when every question was settled by force of arms, and the hardest hitter had the best of the argument; and while they marched to help their party or their king, their strongholds were left in charge of their wives. This necessitated the assumption, at least, of a martial spirit on the part of the lady of the castle, since, if her lord's friends got the worst of the bout, the victors were pretty sure to call upon her at their earliest convenience; and when put to the touch, many a lady of high degree showed herself proficient in the art of self-defence. The Northampton Dudleys owe their curious crest—a helmeted female, with bare bosom and dishevelled hair—to an Amazon *pro tem*, Agnes Hotot. The father of this plucky and stalwart girl, having a dispute with a neighbour as to the ownership of a certain piece of land, agreed to settle the matter by ordeal of battle. When the day came, Hotot lay ill and incapable, fretting and fuming in his bed at the thought of losing his land without striking a blow for it. Miss Agnes, determined that neither father nor foe should be disappointed, donned a suit of armour, mounted her sire's horse, appeared at the rendezvous, and acted her part so ably, that she unhorsed her adversary, and made him sue for mercy, whereupon she made herself known to the mortified gentleman, and rode home in triumph.

That women with no gentle blood in

their veins could play the soldier well, chronicler Hall testifies. Recording the battle near Naworth Castle, in 1570, between Lords Hunsdon and Dacres, he says, "There were amongst the rebels many desperate women that gave the adventure of their lives, and fought right stoutly." One such plebeian virago has a triple chance of escaping oblivion, her name being enshrined in the verse of Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Butler, to say nothing of her having a ballad all to herself. English Moll, as Butler calls her, distinguished herself in the attempt to recover Ghent from the Prince of Parma, in 1584:

When captains courageous, whom Death did not daunt,
Did march to the siege of the city of Gaunt,
They mustered their soldiers by two and by three,
And the foremost in battle was Mary Ambree.

Armed with sword and target, and encased in mail, this Amazon is said to have placed herself at the head of a thousand and three men, and sustained an unequal combat with three thousand Spaniards for seven hours, displaying wonderful skill and strength, and when forced to draw off her men, retiring into a castle, from which she defied the enemy, and challenged any three Spaniards to try their prowess against her single arm. Summoned to surrender, she spurned the offer with contempt, telling the Spanish commander,

No knight, sir, of England, or captain you see,
But a poor simple lass called Mary Ambree.

She came out of the war unscathed, and returned to England, but of her ultimate fate the balladist, who sang so heartily of her valour, is silent.

Our next specimen of the British Amazon is a modern one. Hannah Snell, the youngest daughter of a Worcester hosier, came of a martial-minded stock; each of her three brothers shouldered a musket in the king's service, and all her four sisters chose soldiers or sailors for their husbands. Hannah was born upon St. George's Day, 1723, and even as a child preferred playing at soldiers to any more feminine game. When seventeen, she lost father and mother, and by consequence, her home, finding a new one with a married sister in London. Three years later, she was married by a Fleet parson to a Dutch seaman, who, after ill-treating her and half starving her for seven months, suddenly disappeared. One would have thought Hannah would have rejoiced at getting rid of her ill-conditioned mate; but she determined to go in

quest of the truant, borrowed a suit of her brother-in-law's clothes, and thus disguised, found her way to Coventry. Here she enlisted in Captain Miller's company of Guise's regiment, and began her campaigning with a twenty-two days' march to Carlisle. Unluckily for her prospects, our heroine made a mortal enemy of one of the sergeants, by thwarting him in some dishonourable scheme, and he soon contrived to revenge her interference by accusing her of neglect of duty, and getting her sentenced to receive six hundred lashes. These, or rather four hundred of them, were duly administered, if we may trust her biographer, although it is hard to understand how such a punishment could be inflicted without her sex being discovered. Disgusted with this harsh treatment, Hannah left the regiment without troubling the authorities for a formal discharge, and after wandering about for a month, found herself in Portsmouth, with empty pockets. In this predicament, she could think of nothing better than accepting his majesty's bounty again, and ere many hours elapsed, Hannah was transformed into a marine, and doing duty on board the sloop *Swallow*, attached to Boscawen's fleet, bound for the East Indies.

James Gray, as she called herself, became popular on board the sloop on account of her readiness to help her messmates in washing and mending their clothes. After a futile attempt on Mauritius, the fleet made for Fort St. David's, on the coast of Coromandel, and the marines disembarked to strengthen the army besieging Aracopong. Gray was engaged in several skirmishes, and witnessed the blowing up of the enemy's magazine, which brought the siege to an end. Marching on Pondicherry, the troops were obliged to ford a river running breast high, in the face of the French batteries, and our female warrior was the first "man" to cross. She took her share in picket duty, worked hard at trench-making, and when the trenches were made sat in them for seven successive nights mid-deep in water; she received six shots in one leg, and five in the other, and then was hit in the groin. Not caring to ask the aid of the regimental surgeon, Hannah secured the services and secrecy of a black woman, with whose help she extracted the ball and cured the wound. Sickness next struck her down, and obliged her to go into the hospital for three months. Upon

her recovery she was sent on board the *Tartar*, pink, and served as a common sailor, until turned over, in the same capacity, to the *Eltham*, man-of-war. The smoothness of her face and chin earned her the sobriquet of Miss Molly Gray, but when her new shipmates found her ready to join in any fun afoot, they rechristened her *Hearty Jemmy*. While on shore at Lisbon, she learned by the merest accident that her faithless husband had been executed for the murder of a gentleman at Genoa. The *Eltham* was paid off in 1750, and Hannah resumed her petticoats. Her story was talked about, and the manager of the *Royalty Theatre*, in Wellclose-square, induced her to appear there in several naval and military characters. The Duke of Cumberland obtained her a pension of twenty pounds, and changing her vocation once more, she took a public house at Wapping, attracting customers thereto by a sign representing a sailor and a marine, with the legend, *The Widow in Masquerade, or the Female Warrior*. The venture proved successful, and unmindful of her first failure, Hannah married a carpenter named Eyles, and had a son born to her, to whom a lady of fashion stood godmother, and carried out a godmother's duty by paying for his education. Brave Hannah's career came to a peaceful but sad end; in 1789 she became insane, and was removed to Bethlehem Hospital, where she died on the 8th of February, 1792, at the age of sixty-nine.

Christian Kavanagh was the daughter of an Irish maltster, who, soon after the battle of the Boyne, went to the bad in his business, and was glad to have her taken off his hands by an aunt, the hostess of a Dublin inn. In course of time Christian occupied her aunt's place, and married her waiter, Richard Welsh. Two children came, and for four years her life jogged on comfortably and quietly enough. One day Welsh went to pay the brewer, and never came back; for twelve months his wife heard nothing of him; then came a letter relating how he had been inveigled on board a vessel taking recruits to Flanders, how he had spent his money, and in desperation enlisted. Mrs. Welsh was not long deciding what to do. She placed her children with some relatives, donned male attire, and followed her husband's example.

Taking kindly to drill, Christian Welsh was quickly despatched to Holland, fought her first fight at Landen, received her

first wound, and was invalided for a couple of months. This bad beginning did not damp her ardour; on the contrary, she grew so attached to a military life that she forgot the purpose for which she embraced it, and never troubled herself to make any inquiries about her Richard. The following summer, while foraging, she was taken prisoner, but was soon exchanged and back with her regiment. While quartered at Goreum, Christian had the impudence to make love to a burgher's daughter, actually fighting a duel with a rival, and wounding him dangerously. This rival was a sergeant, and but for the intercession of the girl's father the victorious Amazon would have paid dearly for her triumph; as it was, she was dismissed the regiment. She immediately entered Lord John Hayes's dragoons, serving with them at the capture of Namur. At the peace of Ryswick the regiment was disbanded, and the she-dragon returned to England, but never went home—her mind was thoroughly unsexed, and she hated the idea of confessing her womanhood.

Upon the breaking out of the war of the Spanish succession, Christian went back to her old regiment, and did a man's part in most of the engagements of Marlborough's campaign of 1702-3. At the battle of Donavert, in 1704, a ball penetrated her hip. The doctors failed to extract the bullet, but nearly discovered her secret. At the battle of Hochstadt, she was one of a party detached to guard the prisoners; while performing this duty she came across her husband, whom she had not seen for twelve years, and discovered that he had consoled himself by taking a Dutch woman as her successor. The irate dame, making herself known to the astonished man, gave him a bit of her mind, but relieved his fears by declaring she had no intention of claiming her rights, but would be a brother to him so long as he did not betray her confidence. This curious bargain was faithfully kept, until a shell fractured Christian's skull at Ramillies, and the surgeon who trepanned her found out the long hidden truth, and his patient was of course dismissed the service. The officers saw her remarried to Welsh, and subscribed a handsome sum by way of dowry. No longer allowed to fight, the stout-hearted matron turned cook and sutler; the officers did not look very closely into her doings, and she, consequently, turned the change to profitable account. Her husband was killed at Taisnieres. Eleven weeks afterwards she married a grenadier,

to become a widow again, before St. Venant; but she followed the fortunes of the army till the war came to an end, and her occupation with it.

Taking the advice of the Duke of Argyll, Christian Jones petitioned Queen Anne, setting forth that she had served her country as a soldier for twelve years, had received several wounds, and lost two husbands in her majesty's service. The petition, presented in person, was most graciously received. Perceiving that the petitioner would soon give her another subject, the queen ordered fifty pounds to be given her to defray expenses, promising that if the child proved a boy, he should receive a commission as soon as he was born. Great was Christian's chagrin when she became the mother of a girl. However, the queen did not forget her. A pension of a shilling a day was bestowed on her, and she again changed her name by marrying one Davis, a soldier, of course, settling down at Chelsea and laying the gentry and military under contribution whenever she needed any extra comforts. While engaged in nursing her husband, Christian caught cold; this brought on serious illness, and ended her adventurous life on the 7th of July, 1739. This extraordinary woman was interred with military honours in the burying-ground of the Soldiers' Hospital.

In 1761, a woman enlisted under the name of Paul Daniel, in the hope of being sent to Germany, where her husband was serving in the army, but was detected by a keen-eyed sergeant. In 1813, a farmer's daughter, hailing from Denbighshire, took his majesty's shilling, and entered the Fifty-third Regiment, in order to be near her lover. She had, however, made a slight mistake, and when she found her sweetheart had joined the Forty-third, the damsel's martial desires evaporated, and she obtained her discharge.

Amazons have not been unknown to the naval service. One Ann Mills served as a seaman on board the Maidstone frigate, and distinguished herself by her personal prowess in an action with a French ship. In 1761, Hannah Whitney, while disporting herself in male attire, was seized by a press-gang, and sent, with other victims, to Plymouth prison. Indignant at this treatment, the fair captive declared she was not what she seemed to be, at the same time letting the authorities know their harshness had lost them the services of a marine of five years' experience. The fact that a

woman fought and died on board one of Nelson's ships, came to light in a curious way. In 1807, a young woman, calling herself Rebecca Ann Johnston, was brought before the lord mayor, having been found, in a sad condition, in the streets. She was dressed as a sailor, and said she came from Whitby, having deserted from a collier, after serving four out of the seven years' apprenticeship to which she had been bound by her step-father, who had likewise bound her mother to the sea, on which she met her death at the bombardment of Copenhagen. The last female warrior of whom we have anything to say, can scarcely be called a British Amazon, unless her having served under the British flag entitles her to the designation. All we know about her is contained in the following paragraph from the Annual Register of 1815: "Amongst the crew of the Queen Charlotte, one hundred and ten guns, recently paid off, it is now discovered was a female African, who had served as seaman in the royal navy for upwards of eleven years, several of which she has been rated able on the books of the above ship, by the name of William Brown; and has served as the captain of the foretop, highly to the satisfaction of the officers. She is a smart figure, about five feet four inches in height, possessed of considerable strength and great activity; her features are rather handsome for a black, and she appears to be about twenty-six years of age. Her share of prize-money is said to be considerable, respecting which she has been several times within the last few days at Somerset-place. In her manners she exhibits all the traits of a British tar, and takes her grog with her late shipmates with the greatest gaiety. She says she is a married woman, and went to sea in consequence of a quarrel with her husband, who, it is said, has entered a caveat against her receiving her prize-money. She declares her intention of again entering the service as a volunteer."

LELGARDE'S INHERITANCE.

IN TWELVE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER VII.

LELGARDE had forced me into an arm-chair, and flung herself down on a footstool at my feet, turning so that she could speak without my seeing her face. These preparations almost frightened me. What was she going to say? Her beginning took me by surprise.

"Joan, when we were talking about ghosts the other night, at the rectory, you only said something about it in joke. What do you think seriously?"

"Seriously, my dear, I think there is no necessity to make up one's mind, as we are not at all likely to be troubled with such visitations."

"If you saw a ghost, what would you think? what would you do?"

"Have you seen a ghost?" I asked, to bring matters to a point.

She looked up at me earnestly.

"Joan, I declare to you solemnly that I believe I have: not once, nor twice, but many, many times. My life has been made wretched; my nights—oh! how can I have such nights, and keep my life and reason?"

She was trembling violently. I felt that it must all be told now; stroking down her hair, I said, as quietly as possible: "Tell me all about it, child, as distinctly as you can; it will be all right, depend upon it."

"I will—I will tell you all. Hold me closer, Joan—how I love your dear old steady hand. You will hold mine when I am dying, won't you, Joany? You will take care of me to the last?"

"Go on, my dear; you are not going to die just yet."

"I don't know—sometimes I feel as if I could not bear much more of this; but I don't want to die, it is horrible to think of drifting out into the cold shadow-world, where—where they are—where she is. Oh! Joan, listen to the wind."

"Never mind the wind, my child," said I, "and as to death—though it is life you should be thinking about—what is death but going to our mother, to your father—to the Great, Good Father of us all?"

"But the valley of the shadow of death, the king of terrors! Those words have meaning, Joan. Well, I am telling you nothing; be patient, and I will. You remember the day we examined the cabinet, and saw her picture? the day Mrs. Bracebridge told us that sad story?"

"Yes; and how you waked me up at an unearthly hour the next morning."

"You asked me if I had slept badly. Now, Joan, I am going to tell you the history of that night, solemnly and truly."

"Go on, little woman, I am listening to you."

"I fell asleep—and how long I slept I do not know—I can hardly say I awoke:

that does not describe it—but I became conscious suddenly; and what roused me was the sound of weeping—such weeping, so despairing, so terrible, Joan, that it made my heart stand still.”

“My poor little pet, it was Mrs. Bracebridge had been telling us about those terrible hysterical weepings—you were over-wrought by the story, that is all.”

“Let me go on: next I became conscious that I could see. There was some sort of light, but whether from window, fire, or candle, I cannot tell you, but I saw—yes, distinctly, a figure by my bedside; I never can remember the dress, I have only a vague impression of some loose wrapper, of a light colour; but the face! oh, Joan, believe me, I am not fancying things; it was the face of Miss Hilda’s portrait, only older, far older, worn and white, and bathed in tears—such a face of despair, that if you really saw such a one, you would be wretched for days afterwards.”

“But, fortunately, it was only seen in a dream, my pretty one: a dream very easily accounted for. Come, is that all?”

“I wish it were. Now, Joan, all this does not seem to me like a dream in looking back upon it; but what came next, you will say must have been. I had a vague feeling of being carried—hurried along dark galleries, and down cold stairs. Oh, this I never can make you understand. I can’t get at my own idea, or put it into words. It was I who endured all this, it was I who felt the cold, and the wretchedness, and the sickening, overwhelming terror; and yet it was not I, but another creature: and I pitied that other creature—that other, that was I, and yet not I.”

“Nightmare.”

“Call it so if you will. I grew more conscious, but the scene was changed. I stood before that cabinet. Do you remember my saying I fancied it had a secret recess somewhere?”

“I do.”

“Well, that recess opened at a touch—mine, or that other’s—and something was found there, something was said to me. I have tried for hours and hours to recollect what, but I cannot—it is all a blank. Only one sentence I seem to have carried away with me, wailed into my ears in a despairing moan, ‘Remember, when the day comes, that wrong can never be right.’”

“And was this all your dream?”

“It ends always with some vague feeling of cold and discomfort, but nothing more

is distinct. The vision, or dream, if you like, fades away, and the next thing that happens is that it is morning.”

“Then this has happened more than once?”

“More than once? Night after night! Joan”—she hesitated here—“you fancy that my liking for Mr. Seymour Kennedy is strange. Do you know the reason of it? He has power to lay the ghost.”

“What can you mean?”

“I mean that the night after his visit, and sometimes the night before, I am never troubled. It is strange, is it not? I don’t like him really; he is most unlike all that I have been used to make my type of excellence; but surely he must be destined in some way to rule my fate, or why has he this strange influence over the curse that pursues me?”

“A curse!—my dear, strong language! Those dreams show a bad state of health, and you ought to have mentioned them before.”

Lelgarde rose and stood before me, looking like a ghost herself in her white wrapper.

“Joan,” she said, “I have allowed you to talk about dreams, but it will not do; it is no dream, no fancy. Something does really visit my room at night.”

Her voice, her tone of conviction, the remembrance of the servants’ gossip, all made my blood curdle. Unimaginative as I am, little as I believe in ghosts, I could hardly command my voice in asking Lelgarde to explain her reasons for what she said.

“Every night I lock my door, and I always find it locked in the morning; but my room is entered nevertheless. I always put my candle on this chair by the bed. I have repeatedly in the morning found the chair moved, the candle and match-box put on the table. You know,” and she smiled a little, “how you used to fidget me about putting my shoes side by side, and that I have got into the fixed habit of doing so. Well, I have found them separated, as if some foot, treading perhaps in doubtful light, had disarranged them.”

“A substantial spirit then, Lelgarde, by your own showing.”

“You mean that you think some one is playing me a trick? Who could be so fiendishly cruel? Besides, how do you account for the cabinet, the secret recess, all those strange visions which, even in the daytime, haunt me? I vow to you, Joan, that I can never shake them off, except

when Mr. Kennedy is here. He is so amusing and clever, and I get sometimes so much entertained, and sometimes so angry with him, that just for that time I forget myself."

"And then you do not dream? Dearest, does not that show that it is an effect of imagination—the whole thing?"

"I have told myself so; I almost believed it. And then I began to observe the disarrangements in my room. Joan, it is useless to fight against it. I am doomed to be hunted down—that is what I feel, that and nothing else. Tell me, why could I not live here as a child? What was it that scared me nearly to death or madness?"

She was kneeling before me now, looking at me with her great woful eyes, full of a dark terror which I felt almost powerless to fight against.

"We will go away, Lelgarde," I cried; "you are rich, my darling: you shall not stay here to be ill. Let us go to Italy: let us go to Rome, and look up your old friend Harry."

Things were come to a pass, indeed, when I was driven to this suggestion! I was glad to see her cheeks colour up, and a more natural look return to her eyes.

"Yes, I should like that," she said. "I should dearly like it—but I thought I ought to stay here; it is my home, and my duties lie here."

"Your first duty is to get well and strong, my pet."

"Perhaps so; as it is, I am getting weaker every day. I cannot tire myself into sound sleeping, as I used to do; and oh! do you wonder that I dread death? To become myself one of that fearful, shadowy world!"

"Hush, Lelgarde, we will talk no more about it to-night. You shall sleep in my arms, as you did in your baby days. Come, let us say our prayers and go to bed; and let the ghosts think twice before they come and torment my child, now she has her old Joan to take care of her."

I succeeded in making Lelgarde smile, but I must confess that I was feeling very shaky, for all my bold speeches. Lelgarde, thoroughly exhausted, and safe in my arms, was soon sleeping heavily with her head pillowed on my shoulder; but I lay awake all night long, listening to the wind, trembling at the driving rain, and hearing in every slamming door and creaking window ghostly footsteps coming to haunt my darling.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was not till daylight was peeping in through the chinks in the closed shutters that Lelgarde opened her eyes with a freshened, invigorated look which did my heart good.

"Yes," she said, in answer to my anxious questions, "I have slept soundly indeed. It seems only a minute ago that I went to bed. Oh! dearest old Joan! what a blessing you are to me!"

"And this heavy-treading ghost has not been here to-night," I said, pointing to the little slippers; "everything is just as we left it; let us hope that it is exorcised for good and all."

Nevertheless, I was resolved to carry Lelgarde away for a little while. I must own that I felt almost as anxious as she could be to get away from Athelstanes, the servants' talk tallying so uncomfortably with what she herself had told me, had impressed on my mind a vague sense that everything was weird and uncanny, and I went about, feeling ready to jump and scream on the smallest provocation. But several days and nights passed, and nothing happened to frighten either of us. Determined not to let Lelgarde pass another solitary night as long as we were under that roof, I had a mattress carried into her room every night, and I had the satisfaction of seeing her look fresher and brighter at every awakening. She had ceased to hang restlessly about Miss Hilda's room, and I was quite sorry, when, one afternoon, only two or three days before that fixed for our departure, Mrs. Bracebridge requested her presence there to decide on some question of new chintz or dimity, which might quite as well have waited till our return.

But Mrs. Bracebridge's requests were not easy to refuse or shirk; and she was anxious to set all her handmaidens to their sewing while we were away; so she discoursed, pointing out the tattered state of the garniture in question, and Lelgarde assented, her eyes all the time roving about with the hunted look which I hoped had entirely left them. I cut short the good old lady's speech as much as I could, and when she was gone I tried to hurry my sister off at once to the drawing-room; but she lingered, and, as if drawn by some irresistible attraction to the ebony cabinet, opened it, and again began fingering it in every direction, with the perplexed look of a child over a puzzle.

"I cannot make it out," she murmured.

"Sunday, to-morrow," I said, as if I had not heard her; "I suppose Mr. Seymour Kennedy will be here; our sudden move will take him by surprise."

"He has a fine evening for his journey," she said, closing the cabinet, and we went into the drawing-room.

That night I awoke suddenly, with the peculiar sensation of not waking naturally, with a tightening of the breath, and a vague feeling of terror. My bed faced the door—and that door—that door which I had myself locked overnight—stood wide open, showing the black passage outside. It had come then, whatever it was—this night-walking horror—its haunting presence was to manifest itself also to me. We burned a night-light, and I raised myself softly, and looked at Lelgarde's bed to see if she were awake or not. The bed was empty!

Never shall I forget that moment of wild, perfectly unreasoning horror. Had this dreadful thing the power to lure her away to some fearful doom? Could such things be permitted in a world God governed?

These thoughts went whirling through my brain, while I threw myself out of bed, and made one spring to the door; at the same moment the moonlight came streaming through the long line of windows along the gallery; and, a few yards in front of me, full in the flood of light, glided along a white-robed female figure. On, on, on, with even footsteps—at the head of the stairs it paused for half a moment, and I got a clearer view of it. Is it the spirit of Hilda Atheling? No—that desolate figure in Harry Goldie's picture has surely stepped out of his canvas. It is Lelgarde, Lelgarde herself! though the fixed, corpse-like features, the dead expression of the eyes are most unlike her. Thanks to stout nerves and common sense, in one minute I understood the whole—Lelgarde had resumed the naughty tricks of her childhood, and was walking in her sleep. All was explained now; the white figure, the disarranged room, the unfastened door. In the relief of that moment I could have laughed aloud, but I checked every sound that could disturb her sleep. The doctor's assurances, long ago uttered, recurred to my mind, that to wake her hastily might cost her her reason or her life.

As I had often done in days gone by, I crept after her, keeping down my breath, holding myself ready to clasp and soothe her, should she suddenly awake, and tolerably free from uneasiness about her safety,

as I had often seen with what more than waking caution she could guide her steps.

Evenly and softly she moved down the broad, shallow stairs; across the hall, and into Miss Hilda's room; I following. Straight to the cabinet she walked—the moon filled the room with its pale brightness, and I could see all her actions distinctly. She opened the doors, she took out and laid aside, without an instant's hesitation, the third drawer on the right-hand side: she ran her fingers over some small ivory mouldings, which formed a pattern round the pigeon-hole thus revealed; they were exactly alike, but I saw her select one, and then—not press it, as she had always tried to do when awake—but draw it towards her. It remained in her hand, a long, ivory-headed peg, and there dropped into the aperture from above a small square receptacle—a sort of drawer, closely packed with papers. She took them, unfolded them one by one, looking with her fixed, unseeing eyes, straight before her all the while; folded them up and put them back, replacing one after the other, box, peg, and drawer, closed the cabinet, then repeated, in the dull voice of a child saying a lesson which it does not understand:

"If that day should ever come, I will look here, and remember that wrong can never be right."

Then she left the room, mounted the stairs, traversed the long gallery, finally, to my intense relief, entered her room, re-locked the door, barely giving me time to slip in after her, and laid herself down in her bed. I took the precaution of extracting the door-key, and putting it under my pillow: and then, chilled to the bone, and a good deal perplexed, but wonderfully comforted, I composed myself to sleep.

"Are you certain? Was it really so?" Lelgarde asked incredulously, when kneeling by her bedside in the early morning I told her all the adventures of the night. Then, throwing her arm round my neck, and drawing my ear down close to her lips, she whispered:

"Are you sure I was alone?" And I felt her quiver with superstitious dread.

"My dearest, you must use your common sense," I said, with all the authority I could muster; "you know this is nothing new, only an old habit resumed."

"A habit that grew out of my first visit here, Joan; and what natural power could lead me to find out that secret drawer which I can never have seen opened?"

"Are you sure that you never saw it opened? Do you remember our conversation the first evening that we met Mr. Seymour Kennedy? I begin to think that some recollection of your first visit has all this time been working in your brain without your own knowledge."

"Are you certain that you did not dream all this yourself?"

"Well, that is a question we can soon settle; I will undertake to teach you the way to open the hidden drawer as you taught it to me last night."

The breakfast-bell sounded before we were ready for it: and we would not keep the servants loitering over their work on a Sunday morning: but, as soon as we had despatched the meal, we hastened to search the ebony cabinet. I must confess that I felt a little doubtful of my own senses, when I saw its improbable aspect, and Lelgarde was inclined to laugh at me, perhaps really to hide some little tremor.

"Is this the little ivory knob? This third one on the right side? I do not believe it, Joan; it is impossible to get a sufficient hold of it to pull it—ah!"

She broke off suddenly; with unexpected force the little projection seemed almost to spring to meet her fingers, and, as she drew out the peg, down fell the small uncovered box with its hoard of tightly compressed papers.

"There! was I dreaming?" I exclaimed; but Lelgarde interrupted me with a shrill cry, half fright, half relief, and clasped her fingers over her eyes.

"I see—I see it all. I remember the whole of it!" she cried, eagerly; "it all comes back to me. Oh, poor little creature, how I suffered! how scared and terrified I used to be."

"Are you crazy, my child? What is it you remember?"

"This drawer—that opening—was not it just what a child would remember? And the way I was shown it—the fright! Oh, no wonder I had a nervous fever—no wonder I ran away: this has reminded me of everything."

"Tell me what it is, quickly, dearest; but don't get so excited about it."

Gathering the papers up in her hand, she said:

"I do not know what these are, I never did know; but, Joan, I know now who it was that frightened me at Athelstanes; it

was that poor, weeping, terrible woman, my cousin Hilda. Yes, that was when it—my vision, I mean—really happened, in truth, not in fancy. It was she who used to come, with her terrible weeping, and wake me up at night, and bring me down here, poor little, cold, scared thing, and show me the secret of the hiding-place, and repeat again and again those words about wrong never being right; and make me promise to look here in case I should ever be mistress of Athelstanes. What ever these papers contain, remember, Joan, I said all this before I looked at them."

"Then Miss Hilda, not Miss Etheldreda, was your tormentor after all. But surely, Lelgarde, she was bed-ridden, or, rather, sofa-ridden; had she not lost the use of her limbs?"

"Of course she had; every one said so. Oh! I see this room now just as it used to be, and her waxen-looking face and hands, and draperies, all as white as snow, on this red couch. That was the dreadful thing; seeing her lie motionless all day, and then being visited by her in this stealthy, fearful way at night; and then she wept. Oh! how is it I ever forgot that weeping?"

"She must have been a most persistent humbug, or else crazy," I said, feeling anything but charitable towards Miss Hilda.

"Let us see what she had had to turn her brain. I almost begin to think I can guess," said Lelgarde, growing a shade paler. She opened the first paper, glanced over the few lines which it contained, did the same with the next, and then placed them in my hands with a strange sort of smile. "No wonder," was all she said.

The first paper was a certificate of the marriage of Hilda Atheling with Henry Hamilton at some church in the City; the second, bearing date about a year later, recorded the baptism of a second Henry Hamilton, at a seaside town, far away in the West of England.

The secret of Hilda Atheling's life was out at last.

On the 27th of April will be commenced

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